

## 6. California's Changing Society and Mexican American Conceptions of the Great Strike

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El Jefe de Policía concentró anoche su fuerza en nuestra ciudad, para estar listo en cualquier emergencia que pudiera ocurrir con motivo de los acontecimientos que tienen en alarma al resto del país.

—*La Crónica*, July 28, 1877

[Last night the police chief concentrated his city forces to be ready for whatever emergency could occur induced by the events that have alarmed the rest of the country.]

On the night of Friday July 20, 1877, fire razed the Southern Pacific Railroad Hotel located adjacent to the Los Angeles depot. This clandestine attack on railroad property occurred under the cover of darkness, absent the public spectacle that accompanies mob action. In fact, no Los Angeles newspaper reported if authorities ever apprehended the arsonists. But the event, along with news of the violent strikes in the East, raised concern sufficiently to result in a specially organized "police guard" at the city depot by the following weekend intended to prevent potential outbreaks of violence. The chief of police, "ready for whatever emergency," ordered the engines out of the roundhouse with boilers lit. The volunteer force then patrolled railroad property every night until the eastern strikes had ended.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, events just west of the city in Santa Monica further reveal the limited commitment Angelenos had to disrupting railroad operations. On July 23, a determined and unusually large crowd descended on the Santa Monica Railroad, jamming city trains and demanding admittance. These patrons came not in protest but in their shared desire to escape the summer heat by traveling to local beaches.<sup>2</sup> Hardly the mob of Baltimore or Buffalo, the largest gathering in Los Angeles looked to the railroad for summer rec-



reation. The only attack in Santa Monica came on the twenty-fifth. The *Santa Barbara Daily Press* reported that on Wednesday an unidentified assailant sabotaged the Santa Monica Railroad by cutting a signpost and laying it across the tracks. Fortuitously discovered by passers-by, the potentially deadly roadblock was quickly removed and resulted in no harm to any trains or passengers. A July 27 telegraph to California railroad baron Collis Huntington declared "the best of feeling among railroad employees all along the line" and that the potential for violence was low.<sup>3</sup>

The eastern strike and uprisings in San Francisco did make for a tense several days in Los Angeles and San Diego. But just like the limited violence targeting railroads, labor rallies similarly created a lot of smoke and little fire. For one, the major Californian railroads acted quickly to assuage their workers, rescinding an earlier decision to cut wages and effectively extinguished any potential labor trouble. Rather than protest their own wages, several working groups met in Los Angeles during the last two weeks of July to address the situation in the East. These meetings remained small and received limited mention in the city press. But in the wake of San Francisco's mob violence and the increasing momentum of the region's Granger and Workingmen's movements, tension surrounding the labor meetings grew. By the first week of August, the *Los Angeles Star* reported that a particular meeting had induced the formation of yet another police force of about one hundred men to serve, if needed, to prevent a riot. The *Star* attributed the precaution to rumors that "the roughs" from San Francisco had traveled south and might instigate violence in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara Counties. The Los Angeles press rebuked sensational reports in San Diego's papers that fear and mob rule had gripped the city. The "roughs" never appeared, the meeting ended uneventfully, and all the apprehension "amounted to nothing."<sup>4</sup>

With the notable exception of anti-Chinese violence in San Francisco, Californians reacted to news of the strike in discourse rather than in action. As a result, southern California might at first appear far less significant relative to the radical demonstrations in the East. It is no surprise that historians of the Great Strike have paid little attention to California. However, the strike assumes a new meaning when we reconsider the long-absent voices in southern California because the Great Strike is more than labor history. In California, those who wrote about it were not just industrial workers, they were "white" and "nonwhite"; laborers and Rancheros; Americans and Mexicans.

I argue that despite a lack of strike-related action, southern Californians remained far from passive, engaging in a sustained debate about relevant issues of labor, capitalist development, and race. The press turned the strike into a forum of important civic debate suggesting how the strike, the end of Recon-



struction, and new labor questions were framed in a multiethnic West. The dialogue it created tells historians something about the meaning of the strike to southern Californians in a time of rapid social and economic change.

Framing the strike in the workplace, among the roundhouses and engineers, limits the conclusions one can draw about the diverse meanings of the strike. Scholars are increasingly expanding their search. David Stowell's work, by placing the action in city streets, allows historians to consider the meaning of the strike in a new way. It was not only important as a blow by workers against the strains of capitalism in the workplace, it was also a blow by common citizens against the strains of capitalism in the social space of the streets and community. Though the historiography of the strike has recently expanded to include social and urban history, consideration of race and the West remains conspicuously absent from this body of literature.

This essay explores the Great Strike of 1877 from the experience of southern Californians, especially people of Mexican descent.<sup>5</sup> It takes the action out of the workplace and instead locates it in the rhetoric and dialogue among southern Californians. Events outlined in this essay will contribute to a broader understanding of the Great Strike of 1877 by offering discussion of these heretofore-neglected aspects by placing the Great Strike within the context of southern California's anti-Chinese movement, regional and transcontinental railroad debates, and Mexicans' struggles against the onslaught of white hegemony.

Events in southern California also complicate the notion of the strike as a watershed moment in labor and industrial history.<sup>6</sup> Californians had faced the intrusion of capitalist development for decades. By 1877, Mexican Americans were near the culmination of a three-decade-long struggle to resist white hegemony. Mexican Americans had become, in David Weber's term, "foreigners in their native land."<sup>7</sup> To them, the strike served as another defensive moment in this struggle, and thus cannot be considered a breaking point with the past.

Recent scholarship on the railroad, the Compromise of 1877, and the end of Reconstruction in the South highlights the tensions of capitalist development and racial equality in a democratic society.<sup>8</sup> Events in southern California suggest likewise: that a new synthesis of the strike's legacy would interpret the strike within the context of Reconstruction and the transcontinental railroad debate in southern California as a particularly salient moment in the ongoing struggle in United States history between capital, labor, and race. By 1877 southern Californians were engaged in a sustained campaign to bring a second transcontinental line while debating the consequences of the early stages of massive railroad development and capitalist expansion. Meanwhile,



Chinese laborers were becoming the "indispensable enemy" to white workers, and Californios lost much of their land, culture, and authority.<sup>9</sup>

## Mexicans, Anglos, and the California Railroads

We begin our survey of the Great Strike not in 1877 but when the United States obtained California in 1848. The Spanish (1769–1821) and Mexican (1822–48) governments oversaw California's development into an agrarian society based primarily on subsistence farming and, later in the south, large cattle ranches. Spanish institutions mixed with indigenous peoples formed the foundation of California's society and culture. When possession of California transferred to the United States, a fifty-year transition from "Mexican" to "American" California began.<sup>10</sup>

The gradual loss of Mexican authority to Anglos resulted from a complex interaction of several factors, not the least of which involved dramatic demographic shifts. The discovery of gold in 1848 created an almost overnight change in the state's population. The Mexican majority in northern California, consisting of about eight thousand in 1849, quickly became the minority when more than one hundred thousand "forty-niners" flocked to the gold fields. Though many Mexicans attempted to immigrate to northern California (between five and ten thousand by the 1850s), violence and discriminatory laws drove the majority from the diggings. In fact, Mexicans succumbed to the same legislation that victimized the Chinese. As a result, native and foreign Mexicans returned home to Mexico, but others traveled south to Santa Barbara and Los Angeles, where they would remain the majority population until the 1860s.<sup>11</sup>

The Mexican way of life in politics, culture, and the economy slowly gave way to Anglo institutions, the result being the gradual distancing of native Californios from the centers of political and economic authority. A process in which Anglos increasingly identified Mexicans as nonwhite, characterized by their supposed inherent laziness and role as shiftless outsiders, accompanied the gradual loss of Californios' political and property rights.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Mexicans of all classes, native and immigrant, increasingly performed menial labor.<sup>13</sup> Thus, California's Mexican population simultaneously lost their rights as American citizens, their economic status, and their "white" identity.

Of course, Mexicans did not allow these threats and changes to go unchallenged. Historians have identified at least three models of Mexican survival strategies: "separation," "accommodation," and "the third space." Mexican Californians who *separated* resisted white authority by rejecting Anglo institutions completely. But peaceful separation also meant exclusion from



authority in Anglo civic life. For example, in order to divide the electorate in Los Angeles, Anglos gerrymandered voting districts where many Mexicans had grouped together in barrios. This effectively removed Californios and Mexicans from party politics by 1880, whether as candidates or voters.<sup>14</sup>

Those Mexicans who adopted English, formed business arrangements with Anglos, and utilized Anglo courts and social systems, *accommodated* to Anglo culture and social norms rather than fought against them. Unlike in Los Angeles, many Californio leaders in San Diego accommodated to the Anglo takeover as a means of protecting their own interests. When, for example, Anglo legal culture dominated court proceedings, many Californio property owners abandoned the Iberian system to dispute their losses in American courts. Others, San Diegan Juan Bandini being perhaps the most successful, entered into lucrative business partnerships with prominent Anglos.<sup>15</sup>

But the majority of Mexican Californians occupied a *third space*, accommodating to some Anglo institutions and at the same time maintaining many separate culturally Mexican ones. The third space tactic was often difficult because Mexicans had to negotiate the middle ground with important choices every day. How would they fight for political participation? How would they identify themselves? The range of responses was broad, but Mexicans increasingly identified themselves as Mexican Americans, spoke both English and Spanish, and sought to incorporate issues specific to their needs into political debate. Recent scholarship suggests that rather than have "whiteness" thrust upon them, "many Southwest Hispanic elites were white or passed for white using Mexican, not Anglo criteria." In this way, Mexicans were agents shaping the terms of a white identity "to resist the annihilation of their own class."<sup>16</sup>

Coverage of the strike in the Hispanic press suggests another example of this third space tactic to define the terms of their whiteness. Though Anglo institutions, labor and economic structures, as well as race and class ideologies provided the context within which Mexicans would have to operate, Mexicans themselves shaped and defined them to their advantage. Assertions of whiteness were an important defensive weapon for California's Mexican population in 1877 because by the early 1880s, Mexicanos and Mexican Americans had become "people of color" to most Anglos.<sup>17</sup>

The tension between legal ideals and ideological realities led many Mexican Americans to appropriate the rhetoric defining the Anglo white working class.<sup>18</sup> This survival tactic of asserting Anglo- and European-oriented conceptions of whiteness has a long history in southern California, extending as far back as the Spanish period. Californios emphasized their European blood to distinguish themselves from indigenous populations. A number of Mexicans tried again in the 1850s to reassert that whiteness, but this time in



terms of free-labor ideology. This legacy mixed in 1877 with new paradigms of American whiteness and resulted in what I argue was for some a conscious effort to critique capitalism while aligning with an American white citizenry.

During the presidential campaign of 1856, many Mexicans in Los Angeles attempted to link themselves with the larger body of Anglo white workers by accepting the racialized components of free-labor ideology. The logic of free-labor ideology for Republicans in 1856 necessarily meant the preservation of wage labor and free land for white men.<sup>19</sup> Anglos in California utilized the rhetoric of white exceptionalism to justify claims to the traditional lands of *ranchero* elites. In return, Californios attempted to identify themselves as white while distinguishing themselves as something *other* than black. The political debate in *El Clamor Publico*, the leading Hispanic and Republican organ in Los Angeles during the 1850s, shows how Californios appropriated racialized political rhetoric employed against them for their own use.

Early in the campaign, *El Clamor* editorials included the white supremacy embedded in free-labor ideology by connecting "*la raza blanca*" to "free labor." The editors elaborated on the intent of the Republican campaign and weighed in on the heated abolition debate, arguing that the party "opposes the extension of black slavery, within our national territories, as it [slavery] conflicts with the work interests of free whites, with the development of national resources, [and] as it raises resistance to the absorption of the National territories for the white race [people] . . ." Frequent editorials mentioned "the security of the white race" and "the preservation of the national territories for colonization of the free white race." One letter to the editor, received from a recent immigrant to Los Angeles, articulated the point clearly. The author declared, "I am not any rabid abolitionist. I believe firmly in the non-extension of slavery, if the settlement so desires it." In this way, the newspaper offered an appeal—in Spanish—to the Mexican community that placed them within the ideological body of white citizens uniting the Republican Party.<sup>20</sup>

I speculate that many Californios aligned themselves with the Republican Party in 1856 because its ideology provided a space to negotiate whiteness. Disproportionately high election returns in southern California suggest that the Republicans received strong Mexican support.<sup>21</sup> But Mexican Americans did not vote for the Republican candidate John Fremont, abolitionism, or the Republican's nationalization agenda. Californios voted for the opportunity to unite with whites that the highly racialized free-labor ideology offered. By identifying with Republican Party ideology and denying a "colored" identity (which Democrats projected onto Mexicans), Mexican Californians could place themselves in the shared racial community of the majority of white northerners and their "white" California neighbors.



Thus Mexicans, since the 1850s, set a precedent of negotiated accommodation and conceptions of whiteness framed in terms of Anglo political economy. A similar, though slightly different, process unfolded in 1877 as new labor questions emerged, debate about a transcontinental railroad raged, and hostility against the Chinese increased. By 1877 California had suffered a significant depression aggravated by the presence of the railroad linking the West to eastern markets. Farmers, railroad barons, politicians, and a growing labor movement stood at odds over how best to solve the problem of California's economy.<sup>22</sup>

Debate regarding abusive monopolies, land fraud, regional economic development, and a southern transcontinental railroad stood at the forefront of California's political agenda on the eve of the Great Strike of 1877. In the spring one year prior to the Great Strike, Charles Pickett outlined many of the central political issues facing the residents of California. Pickett, in a series of letters and speeches addressed to the people of California, articulated what many believed was the corruption and economic subjugation the Central Pacific Railroad unleashed on California. The Central Pacific had used its power, he explained, to influence and corrupt the political operations of the state. The people must arise, he urged, utilizing Congress and appropriate legal channels to end the abuse. In addition, Pickett pointed out that because Mexican grants covered much of the Central Pacific's land, the corporation resorted to extortion to obtain the land shares. He also argued for a second transcontinental railroad, south along the thirty-second parallel, in order to end the Central Pacific's economic subordination of southern California. A second line would effectively end the Central Pacific's monopoly and thereby reduce prices and rates, increasing commerce in southern California.<sup>23</sup>

Looking to familiarize themselves with their new opportunities, immigrants to California just one month prior to the strike may have obtained and read "The Lands of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company of California." The Southern Pacific Railroad's pamphlet, directed to perspective landowners and immigrants, advertised the nearly twenty thousand square miles of corporate land for sale. The pamphlet reassured immigrants that low wages, the Chinese threat, and the accusations made of corporate land monopolies were not significant problems in California. While on the eve of the strike southern Californians still worried about the problems Pickett identified, they increasingly added the "Chinese threat" to that list.

According to the Southern Pacific, California offered settlers the best possible prospect for economic independence. Land, business, agriculture, and climate were all better than in any other part of the West. The railroad also



discounted claims that its land monopoly denied farmers the chance to own land. Citing national tenant rates, the pamphlet claimed that California had the lowest laborer to farm ratio in the nation, at two to one. This appeal to the yeoman ideal reminded settlers that "it is better to be poor for a few years on your own land than to be moderately poor as a tenant for others."

The guarantee of success was made all the more certain by Mexico and the greater Southwest's rapid integration into the regional economy. Subtly referring to the Southern Pacific's own plans, the pamphlet noted that it is "considered a certainty" that a railroad would be built from Texas. Indeed, the Southern Pacific's president, Collis Huntington, had been battling Tom Scott for command of the southern route since he assumed control of the Texas & Pacific Railroad in 1871. Huntington attempted to cement his claim by arguing that the "inhabitants of Mexico will do much to enrich Southern California." "There must be a railroad from Mazatlan to Yuma," connecting Mexico to Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Puget Sound, thereby creating "one of the most important channels of travel and trade on the continent." To the Southern Pacific, the claim of Mexican integration into the southwestern economy by way of the railroad was a means of reassuring prospective landowners of the future viability of the region and their own livelihoods.

The Southern Pacific also claimed that the Chinese did not pose a threat to the white worker. "Wages are higher in California than in any other part of the world," the pamphlet declared, besting the rates in the Atlantic states by nearly two times and Europe by as much as three. Future workers need not worry about a degraded state of white labor. The Chinese were paid "higher wages than are paid to persons in the same occupation in the Atlantic states" and they "own little land, labor little on their own account, and have not engaged in any of the higher mechanical pursuits." In short, the pamphlet underplayed one of the most volatile issues in California, arguing that the reality of large numbers of Chinese laborers did not threaten the future success of white Americans. Reaction to the strike suggests that the majority of Californians did not share the Southern Pacific's confidence.

Of course, the pamphlet is much more problematic than its authors wished to acknowledge. Much of the land for sale came to the Central Pacific by way of seized Mexican lands, despite claims to the contrary. And many of the purchasers were not independent families, but large-scale corporate agriculture that eventually challenged and displaced independent producers. In addition, many white Californians continued to blame the Chinese for the perceived threat of low wages and the real condition of high unemployment.<sup>24</sup>



## The Strike and the Great Debate of 1877

Until this Chinese problem is solved on principle[s] that will secure our working-classes from the evils of degrading and ruinous competition with the hordes of pariahs now inundating our coast there will always be danger of sudden and serious disorder.

—*Los Angeles Evening Express*, August 11, 1877

Con las huelgas de obreros en el Este ha coincidido el movimiento anti-chino en California y los disturbios en San Francisco; pero uno y otro movimiento son independientes entre sí; no tienen punto de contacto mas de que una cosa, y es que lo mismo la inmigración de chinos aqui como la opresión de las corporaciones alla redunda en perjuicio del proletario.

—*La Crónica*, August 1, 1877

[The workers' strikes in the East have coincided with the anti-Chinese movement in California and the disturbances in San Francisco. But both movements are independent; they do not have more than one meeting point, it is the same that Chinese immigration here and corporate oppression there results in the harm of the proletariat.]

It is enough to say that the outbreak is one of the best evidences that could be given us against the idea of railroad monopolies, and that those we have should be controlled.

—*San Diego Press*, July 26, 1877

Coverage of the strike in the southern California press became a forum to negotiate the contested issues of race, citizenship, railroad monopolies, and capitalist development. Analysis of that debate reveals a range of responses and interpretations between both Anglo and Mexican populations. Both offered a labor-oriented critique of the strike, but in decidedly racialized terms. Leading Hispanic papers linked the strike to California's debate about Chinese labor, articulating a white identity and thus allying themselves with the nascent Workingmen's movement. The strike also became a means to critique capitalism in general and challenge the power of California's railroad monopoly in particular. Mexican papers articulated a vision of class antagonism, while Anglos believed in the ultimate cooperation of capital and labor. Both groups, however, agreed on the need for government intervention in the economy and direct regulation of California's railroad. Southern Californians also used the strike to make new arguments in favor of a second, southern, transcontinental railroad. Ultimately, the strike served as an impetus for widespread discontent as economic development became intricately tied to notions of whiteness and exclusion.<sup>25</sup>



California's vitriolic anti-Chinese movement framed the labor critique of the strike. Not surprisingly, Anglo papers quickly related the labor unrest in the East to the racist elements of the perceived "labor problem" in California. The *Express* invoked the violence of the strike to further the anti-Chinese cause. The paper characterized the riots in the East as "epidemic" in that they "spread from place to place as if they had been connected with each other by a train of inflammable sympathy." Such was not the case in California. According to the *Express*, the San Francisco riots had ended with much less destruction than might have been were it not for the "good people" of the city. But, "had a serious riot got headway in that city [San Francisco]," the *Express* reasoned, "there is no telling how disastrous an influence it might have had elsewhere." Noting that labor in California "has not reached the same degree of hardship that it has in the thickly populated Atlantic states," the paper warned that there still remained "in our midst an ever-present cause of discontent and source of injury to labor . . . which may yet cause us very serious trouble on this coast." The editors concluded, "Until this Chinese problem is solved on principle[s] that will secure our working-classes from the evils of degrading and ruinous competition with the hordes of pariahs now inundating our coast there will always be danger of sudden and serious disorder."<sup>26</sup> To the Anglo press, Californians had narrowly escaped disaster in the summer of 1877. Most important, the causes of the strike suggested that they might not be so lucky if their own "labor problem" was not soon resolved.

Relatively few Chinese lived in San Diego in 1877, but San Diegans, much like their Los Angeles neighbors, nonetheless linked themselves to the state-wide discussion of "the labor question." The *Press*, throughout the week of the most prominent coverage of the strike, reported on anti-Chinese actions throughout the state. Most important, San Diego Democrats could support the Los Angeles Democrats' anti-Chinese and anti-monopoly platform while cheering reports from Oakland that a crowd had demanded the Central Pacific fire all Chinese workers.<sup>27</sup> In this way, the *Press* linked San Diegans to the larger imagined body of white Californians agitating against the Chinese. The extent of anti-Chinese rhetoric in a city with a relatively small Chinese population also suggests how the strike fanned the flames of racialized labor antagonism throughout the state.

The *Los Angeles Evening Express* explained that the strike offered a solution to "the labor problem" in California. The *Express* reasoned that the strike's "evil has a deeper root" than simply a few upset wage earners. Technological advancement and the concomitant increase in productivity had not enjoyed a correlated rise in consumption because wages had decreased. Wages had decreased because a glut in the labor market meant labor was willing to accept



pay cuts. The *Express* reasoned that the market needed to cut production by instituting an eight hour workday. The paper then took the significant step of applying the same logic to California, reasoning that unemployed white men could not get jobs the Chinese had taken, creating a situation where only three in every four men were currently employed. "We are glad to see that the movement to give preference to white labor in industries that have heretofore been wholly monopolized by the Chinese, is gaining ground" The editors continued, "There is enough work for all our white people, but there is not enough if a great portion is given to Mongolians" The paper called on the railroads to dismiss and repatriate all Chinese labor because "their example would soon be followed by all other corporations."<sup>8</sup> Ridding the state of excess Chinese laborers would ensure full white employment, keeping wages high and the likelihood of violent riots low.

Anglos in southern California took the opportunity to rhetorically connect events in the East with "the labor problem," concluding that the Chinese represented a threat to white workers similar to ethnic workers in the East. Anglos refrained from targeting Mexican laborers and thus presented an interpretation of the strike with which Mexicans could agree. The Hispanic press blamed labor and wage injustice on the Chinese workforce and in so doing united Mexican workers with their Anglo counterparts.

*La Crónica* connected directly the eastern strikes with the question of Chinese labor in California, concluding that both represented a threat to the working class. *La Crónica* asserted a decidedly racialized argument with regards to the anti-Chinese movement in California and the Workingmen's movement in San Francisco. The paper claimed that events in the East and the labor movement in California, although occurring at the same time, had "no more than one meeting point" in common: both the immigration of the Chinese in California and the oppression of corporations in the East resulted in the harm of the proletariat. Mexicans had been victimized because the presence of the Chinese in California had been a hindrance "to our progress in the most important branches of our wealth." The solution to the Chinese problem followed from the same logic *La Crónica* applied to the strike. Editors suggested that legislatures needed to oppose Asian immigration, although they had been "delinquent" to remedy the situation. Whether in the Hispanic *Crónica* or Anglo *Express*, Los Angeles's Hispanic population both articulated and received a view of the strike consistent with the anti-Chinese rhetoric sweeping the state in the summer of 1877.<sup>9</sup>

Anti-Chinese rhetoric in the Hispanic press did not end with the strike, nor was it limited to southern California. The Hispanic press continued to support the racialized arguments of both the Workingmen's movement



and Democratic Party. San Francisco's *La Voz del Nuevo Mundo* encouraged its readers to support the "anti coolie" Democratic candidate to the party's nominating convention, Mr. Taylor. San Franciscans read, "For our part, we hope that all our friends give their vote in his favor as an act of justice and a tribute to his merit." The paper also advised its readers that "Hispanic-Americans of the city" had worked "with unflagging toil for the triumph of his candidacy."<sup>30</sup> But the strike was discussed in broader terms than simply an elegant warning of California's racialized "labor problem."

Both Anglo and Hispanic papers generally recognized the strike as a crisis in capitalism and sympathized with the striking workers, coloring the strike as a "giant struggle between capital and labor."<sup>31</sup> But the Hispanic press rejected the idea that because capital and labor shared mutual interests the consequence of the strike would be equally burdensome. This position was becoming increasingly common after a more immediate challenge to free labor ideology appeared following the Civil War. Two competing visions of political economy were emerging, one based on free labor and the notion that shared interests of capital and labor would increase production, and the other that argued capital and labor were in fact inherently at odds. Rhetoric of the strike suggests that though many Anglos clung to the older belief, Mexicans were asserting an ideology of class conflict.<sup>32</sup>

*La Crónica*, referring to the strike as "the battle between capital and labor" and sympathizing with an "enslaved proletariat," suggested to its readers the tension inherent in capitalist transformation. In addition, *La Crónica* recognized that the strikers would suffer again when it came time to pay for the damage they wrought. Reflecting on the strike in an August editorial, the editors concluded that it had not accomplished any lasting change because the strikers, not government or corporations, would pay for property damage. Corporations had emerged relatively unharmed. The strike had revealed, *La Crónica* lamented, capital's "double domination over the proletariat."<sup>33</sup>

In a lengthy *La Crónica* editorial, Angelenos read an important interpretation of events that reveals much about Mexican sensibilities in 1877. Conscious of the "serious and grave" topic, the editors argued that the strikes, now over, required extended study and presented "an eloquent warning to the proletariat." Criticizing the process of the consolidation of capital, the editors noted that monopolies represented the real threat, "struggling with the united spirit of the proletariat." The changing nature of the American economy had left capital unharmed while it "shaved cruelly salaries much below the necessity for living." If left unchecked, these changes would inevitably lead to more violence.

Unfortunately, corporations had become the "masters" of elections. Thus,



*La Cronica* reasoned, workers had no other recourse but "extreme remedies strikes and revolution." The real tragedy of the strike was not only that democracy had failed, but that the nature of capitalism would continue to burden workers so long as the cost of the strike came not from the government or employers but from the workers themselves. Despite this seemingly grave outlook, *La Cronica* offered a solution that suggested a strong faith in the possible compatibility of capital and representative democracy.

*La Cronica* predicted future crisis if American democracy failed to restrain unbridled capitalist corruption. "We proclaim that in a free country and [one] governed by democratic institutions . . . look for a remedy to all of this in legislative bodies." The paper demanded that the legislatures (presumably both state and national) had the power to remedy the "disastrous social economic situation" by "establishing better harmony and more justice between capital and workers." But just as monopolies dominated elections, corporations had an "iron fist" of interest that controlled legislatures. Thus, the eventual remedy would come after elections and the nation's legislative bodies became free of corporate interests. Short of that, workers would have no recourse but violence, although it would not result in real change because capital did not pay for damage and had no incentive to prevent strikes. Workers then might have but one choice left, revolution.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, the Anglo interpretation of the strike in California suggested a natural ability of capital and labor to reconcile. The *Star's* editors lamented the rioting and violence, placing their "sympathies with the unfortunate men who have been driven to such a degree of desperation by the iron hand of greed and gain." They concluded that the strike represented "a triumph of labor over capital." Unlike *La Cronica*, the *Star's* editors reasoned that in the interests of resuming business, "the rich will have to foot the bill," and did not predict that the consequences of the strike would create any additional burden for workers. The *Star*, quoting the *San Francisco Herald*, agreed that "capital should learn some degree of moderation" because the "capitalist and laboring man [are] dependent on each other."

The *Star* suggested the solution to preventing further outbreaks of labor violence involved realizing capitalism's mutual interests. Citing the example of an Austrian railroad corporation that had reportedly earned considerable profit and "cared for" employees, the paper asserted that capital and labor could cultivate their mutually agreeable interests. The European example, the *Star* concluded, "goes far to take away all the friction between master and men, and shows that there is room for the soul even in industrial affairs." Returning to the strike, the *Star* reminded its readers of the Central Pacific's "lessons learned" when it rescinded the planned wage cut."



Yet at the same time that the *Star* embraced the ability of capital and labor to reconcile, it too advocated government intervention to regulate capitalism. An editorial in the *Star* claimed that most of Los Angeles's press agreed that "the more we examine this matter [the strike] the more we are impressed with the fact that the states of the general government should regulate fares and freight, and even the wages of such employees." Thus Anglos and Mexicans differed on their interpretation of the relationship of capital to labor while they agreed in principle that government should regulate capitalist development.

Such an interpretation made perfect sense to Angelenos who had for years advocated government regulation of the Central and Southern Pacific's rate monopoly. After government regulation, southern Californians put their hope in competition to break the monopoly. Californians advocated loudly and indeed had been successful making their discontent known. Mark Hopkins of the Central Pacific warned Collis Huntington in a September letter of the growing agitation regarding the Central Pacific's "gobbling up the Santa Monica railroad." Hopkins explained that the "Los Angeles people have been raising the devil in public meetings and their newspapers are howling all the time."<sup>37</sup>

Why would the Hispanic press identify fundamental tensions in capitalism as the source of the strikes in the East and then blame the Chinese for similar labor problems in California? For one, *La Crónica* did not believe that Californians had experienced the same level of "deprivations" as had the East, commenting, "you [Californians] know weakly the tyranny of capital. We are in an infinitely superior condition to that afflicting the population where the disturbances occurred." To the editors of *La Crónica*, although Californians had not yet felt the full brunt of capitalist development, they believed capital and labor were inherently at odds.<sup>38</sup> Should the "harm of the proletariat" in the East spread to the West because of the Chinese "problem," California workers would also experience capital's "double domination over the proletariat." In this case, the Hispanic press does not seem to have identified the dominant capitalist force in California, the Southern Pacific Railroad, as the source of their problems. They had reason to join forces with whites in their effort to demonize the Chinese.

*La Crónica* was projecting itself consciously or not, as part of the imagined community of United States citizens. *La Crónica* distinguished American democracy from European and, perhaps implicitly, Mexican, democracy. The editors had faith in an eventual resolution because the success "of the American people" showed that the majority "of the American people are wise." Therefore, "disturbing elements always met resistance in the citizenry," unlike in Europe, where one "can not comprehend a pacification of enaged



masses without great use of powerful military forces." The United States citizenry were distinct in that American society remained "founded on law."

Adopting class language such as "proletariat" served rhetorically to place Mexicans in California's white working class, but in some ways as antagonistic workers. Incorporating the racialized anti-Chinese rhetoric served to place Mexicans alongside, ideologically at least, whites. But by speaking of a unique "American" democracy, *La Crónica* argued that Mexicans in California shared the unique identity of the American citizen. Interpreting the strike, *La Crónica* and its readers identified themselves as sharing a white working-class American identity in contrast to Chinese or European others.<sup>39</sup>

Many in southern California discussed the strike within a larger debate about California's regional development and the politics of opening the Texas & Pacific rail link to San Diego. In Los Angeles and San Diego the familiar complaints about capitalism's systemic inequality, prominently low wages, and high freight rates that harmed small producers and stifled regional economic development lent weight to the regional movement to end the Central Pacific's freight and rate monopoly.

Many in San Diego agreed with the sentiment in Los Angeles. Oblivious to the causes, the *San Diego Press* presented the strike as a losing proposition for workers, but more importantly, for free trade and good business. "Whatever reason the strikers may have had for their war upon commerce and trade, and upon the rights of all to avenge themselves of a real or fancied wrong, will result to their detriment, and largely to their loss."<sup>40</sup> San Diegans did not pay much attention to the labor issues behind the strike. Given the limited coverage of the strike as a labor action and San Diego's long suffering call for an intercontinental rail link, it is little surprise that the *Press* soon couched the strike in terms familiar to its residents.

The strike suggested to San Diegans that the government should regulate the railroads on behalf of small producers. "We do not propose to moralize," began one editorial, "nor do we mean to denounce capital or labor" because both were relevant to the causes of the strike. "It is enough to say that the outbreak is one of the best evidences that could be given us against the idea of railroad monopolies, and that those we have should be controlled." The editorial made explicit that "control" included state regulation of freight rates and workers' wages so "they [railroad policies] shall not wear out the people."<sup>41</sup>

If regulation could not sufficiently reduce the tension between capital and labor, then opening competitive railroad lines would. Among southern Californians, San Diegans were probably the most hostile toward the Southern Pacific monopoly and most vociferous in their attempts to secure a second, southern, transcontinental railroad. Not surprisingly, San Diegans thought of the strike in terms of the dangers monopolies posed to small producers



and workers while casting the violence in the East as a warning to southern Californians who might oppose a second rail link.

Ending the Central Pacific's monopoly with the addition of the Texas & Pacific was on the minds of San Diegans well before Reconstruction ended and the strike erupted in 1877. Before coverage of the strike even appeared in San Diego's press, editorials and city officials actively promoted a southern rail link. The *Union* ran a letter on July 20 that argued the extension of the Texas & Pacific Railroad to San Diego represented the best, if not only, means to undercut the Central Pacific, posing as "an obstacle to monopoly." For the next two days, San Diegans followed articles detailing the Texas & Pacific meetings in Louisiana and Los Angeles, while carefully scrutinizing the railroad bill in Congress. On the twenty third, the *Press* editorialized on behalf of small farmers, claiming that San Diego needed a rail link for "the poor" with only "a lot or two" of land.<sup>42</sup>

Revolt in the East, reasoned the *Press*, demonstrated that competitive lines of trade remained the best way to destroy a monopoly, outside of the law. The paper continued, "The present trouble ought to bring that fact prominently before the people, and especially before Congress. It will perhaps aid in doing so" and "it may be that out of the great evil will come something good after all." If the strike created a "war on commerce" and resulted in "the detriment" of the workers in the East, at least it would advance southern California's call for corporate regulation and the arrival of the Texas & Pacific.<sup>43</sup>

The *Evening Express* in Los Angeles had also become an outspoken opponent of the railroad monopoly by 1877. J. J. Ayers had served as its editor since 1873 and purchased the *Express* in 1872 to prevent its "falling under the control of the railroad company, whose iron grip they [Angelenos] had even then begun to feel."<sup>44</sup> The paper ran regular updates on the negotiations of the Texas & Pacific Railroad, especially in San Diego. The *Express* also articulated its opposition to the Central Pacific's rate monopoly that separated Los Angeles from the Arizona market. These issues would resurface in less than a year at the California State Constitutional Convention.

## The Strike at the State Constitutional Convention, 1878

An amendment: "To prevent the temporary lowering of rates below the cost of operation in order to kill off a rival."

J. J. Ayers, California State Constitutional Convention, Fall 1878

"Provided no native of China, no idiot, insane person, or person convicted of any infamous crime . . . shall ever exercise the privileges of an elector of this State."

California State Constitution, 1879



The very issues at stake in the public dialogue in July resurfaced at the 1878 California State Constitutional Convention, and their resolution suggests the contested nature of California's new political economy after the strike. Calls for a convention to revise the constitution of 1849 occurred as early as 1857 and 1859. Because the Workingmen's Party and the realization of a constitutional convention occurred immediately after the strike, we might speculate about how the Great Strike of 1877 played an important role in shaping those two events.

The conditions breeding grievances had been set in California before the summer erupted in violence — bank failures, farm debt, the perception of high numbers of Chinese, and the presence of a powerful railroad monopoly. And the movement to control monopolies was well underway by July 1877. It is no surprise that southern Californians would interpret the strike in these terms. It is also but a small jump from the rhetoric of the press at the time to the issues at the convention (In fact the *Los Angeles Evening Press's* editor, J. J. Ayers, served as a delegate from Los Angeles.) Armed with this appreciation of the strike for southern Californians, it seems that extensive coverage of the strike hastened convening the convention, placed old concerns in new terms, and shaped the new California constitution.

Certainly we see the same central issues at stake at the convention all discussed extensively in the press during the strike. The issues of anti-Chinese legislation, control of freight rates, the jurisdiction of the state over certain corporations, an eight-hour work day, a board of railroad commissioners, state owned railroads, and the protection of wages were all proposed as amendments at the convention.<sup>46</sup> But more than a mere correlation, the press interpreted and gave meaning to the strike in these terms, thus setting the stage for large-scale discontent at the convention. And as working-class Sino-phobia grew throughout the 1870s, the strike provided the impetus to couch anti-Chinese rhetoric in terms of the dangers of massive labor violence.

The Workingmen were ultimately unsuccessful in their efforts to limit the power of capital in the new state constitution. What amendments they did pass were heavily diluted, including J. J. Ayers's demand for legislation to protect against unfair elimination of competition. The Workingmen also failed to gain the most traditional labor demands, such as the establishment of a bureau of labor statistics or mandating an eight hour workday.<sup>47</sup>

Although the convention may be best characterized by the "ineffectiveness of the Workingmen in Sacramento," the anti-Chinese goals met with great success. One clause forbade Chinese suffrage and Article XIX forbade their employment. The latter also suggested enforced ghettoization or police action against "aliens 'dangerous or detrimental to the peace or well-being of the State,' on the grounds that such aliens would be the cause of breaches of



the peace directed against themselves.”<sup>47</sup> Despite writing laws that seemed impossible to reconcile with the U.S. Constitution, the Workingmen reflected their fears of labor insurrection induced by the threat of Chinese labor. Here we see how rhetoric employed to explain the strike reappeared as California constitutional law.

The new constitution met with approval by the majority of southern Californians. Three of four papers in Los Angeles supported it, along with one in San Diego and one in San Bernardino. The *San Francisco Chronicle* listed the opposition to the constitution as “corporations, railroads, banks (previously exempt from taxation), dealers in mining stocks (previously exempt from taxes) land monopolists, pro Chinese aristocrats, the newspapers who sell out to the above classes, and the preachers who serve the above” All southern California counties voted a majority in favor of the constitution, consistent with the split in northern California between the cities that opposed it and the rural districts that favored it.<sup>48</sup>

For Mexican Californians, the strike was both more, and less, significant than it was for working whites and farmers in California. Interpreting the strike in terms consistent with the anti-Chinese movement may have facilitated formation of the Workingmen Party among both Anglos and Hispanics. However, any rhetorical gains Hispanics made in 1877 do not appear to have parlayed into influence, as it had for whites. For Hispanics, effectively excluded from the convention, the strike represented one of a precious few opportunities to ally themselves with the white workers’ movement in California and advocate for their place in the imagined white nation.

Indeed, Hispanics’ absence from the convention would very much be to their detriment. One proposal, for example, called for the publication of laws in English only, and many pieces of anti-Chinese legislation would end up affecting Mexican immigrants as well. The clause disenfranchising natives of China also provided that no “idiot, insane person, or person convicted of any infamous crime . . . shall ever exercise the privileges of an elector of this State.”<sup>49</sup> Such a definition was all too readily applied to Mexicans. Debate surrounding the strike represented another moment in the long and often unsuccessful struggle of Mexican inclusion in racialized American institutions. And the whole episode through to 1879 suggests another aspect of the complicated story of racial and class solidification in California.

## Conclusion

Though in no way spreading massive labor violence to California, the Great Strike of 1877 did play an important role in how Californians conceived of corporate railroad regulation, competitive railroad expansion, anti-Chinese



sentiment, and Mexican resistance strategies. The significance of the strike in southern California lies not so much in violent actions but in the ways in which Mexicans and Anglos gave meaning to the strike within the context of their own experience. It allows consideration of the strike in broader geographic, temporal, and thematic terms than before. If the significance of the strike in southern California had its roots decades before 1877 and extended beyond the 1880s, then the strike fits into a larger national story not neatly divided at 1877.

The significance of the strike for southern Californians lay in how they linked California's labor, race, and railroad monopoly issues to the strike. For one, Californians joined other Americans in reconceptualizing the relationship of capital and labor. Mexicans tended to argue a vision of antagonism much at odds with the older version of American free-labor ideology. But many Mexicans also understood the strike in terms similar to those of white workers, namely the perceived threat of Chinese labor and railroad monopolies. This explanation of events served as another moment since conquest when some Mexican Californians projected themselves part of the imagined community of white working citizens. While the evidence does not show conclusively whether this was a conscious strategy or not, it nonetheless suggests that one result of the strike was a new dimension to the history of the consolidation of racial identity in California. Before Hispanics adopted a new "Mexican American" identity, they utilized public and political debate regarding the "American" nationalist white identity.

A second point is that much of the southern California press seized upon events in the East to articulate the need for a southern transcontinental railroad in new terms. In previous debates, southern Californians argued that the Central Pacific's monopoly hindered the region's economic development and therefore needed to be ended by bringing the Texas & Pacific to southern California. The San Diego press, in particular, maintained this argument. During the strike, the press also began to argue how the strike demonstrated that the danger a monopoly posed to workers' rights and well being could result in a civil disaster. Ending the Central Pacific monopoly would help avoid both a riot similar to the eastern strikes and regional economic subordination. In this way, the strike strengthened southern California's argument for a second transcontinental railroad through Texas to San Diego. Ultimately, the strikes in the East *against* the presence of the railroad became a powerful argument *for* the presence of a railroad in southern California.

Third, the issues at stake for southern Californians colored their views of the strike and promoted the formation of the Workingmen's Party and the constitutional convention in 1878. Important ideas and laws that charac-



terized the Workingmen's movement and the later Progressive movement received plenty of public discussion among both Anglos and Mexicans. Questions concerning the appropriate role of government and corporations, the balance of capitalism and democracy, and the natural relationship of labor to capital dominated public debate. The Great Strike and the debate surrounding it shaped the outcome of California's constitutional convention and the lives of California's Mexican citizenry for decades.

Finally a fourth significant point needs to be made concerning the strike in the West. Often excluded from the "main" narrative of United States history, the West has been long overlooked as a viable and dynamic factor in the nation's development. The West must be taken into consideration because without it, a very different synthesis of United States history emerges. In the case of the Great Strike, East-centered histories might quickly conclude that 1877 marked a watershed moment in the nation's transition to industrial capitalism. But this research suggests that the significance of the strike to Californians—especially Mexicans, was part of a broader development not neatly cut in 1877.<sup>53</sup> Mexicans' decades-long fight to survive in an increasingly white California—the development of California's railroad—and the rise of the Workingmen's movement are stories that do not include 1877 as a watershed. With this consideration, one can appreciate the salience of the strike but not so neatly conclude that it marked a period of *national* transition.

## Notes

1. *La Crónica*, July 28, 1877.

2. *Los Angeles Daily Star*, July 24, 1877.

3. Telegraph to Collis Huntington, July 27, 1877. Collis P. Huntington Papers, Series I, Reel 13, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

4. *Los Angeles Daily Star*, August 5, 1877. J. A. Dacus, *Annals of the Great Strikes in the United States: A Reliable History and Graphic Description of the Causes and Thrilling Events of the Labor Strikes and Riots of 1877* (New York: Arno Press, 1969 [1877]).

5. A note on terminology: I will use the terms Manuel Gonzales employs in his work, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), because his usage is based on the first national survey to provide empirical evidence about how Latinos see and identify themselves. Accordingly I use *Mexican* to refer to people of Mexican background in the United States. If there is a need to distinguish between native-born and immigrants, I use *Mexican American* for the former and *Mexicanos* (and/or *Mexicanas*) for the latter. I refer to elite native Californians of Mexican, Latin American, South American—and/or Spanish heritage as *Californios*. I use *Latinos* when referring to Americans of Latin American descent. Finally, I use *Hispanic* only as a linguistic term in reference to Spanish-language newspapers.

6. Karl Marx commented from Europe that the workers' uprising against the strains



of capital in the workplace "could serve as the beginning of the establishment of a serious labor party" in the United States. Similarly, the majority of historians studying 1877 have portrayed the uprising as a *labor* strike, marking the beginning of a new era of labor antagonism in the United States. In their assessment of the legacy of the Great Labor Strike, these historians have identified the strike as a "watershed" event in United States history. Despite variations of perspective and emphasis, most of the literature falls within a broad consensus of the strike as a labor uprising, the participants having a wage relationship with the railroads. David O. Stowell, *Streets, Railroads, and the Great Strike of 1877* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 1–11.

7. David Weber, *Foreigners in their Native Land: Historical Roots of the Mexican Americans* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973).

8. See Scott Nelson, *Iron Confederacies: Southern Railways, Klan Violence, and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), and Heather Cox Richardson, *Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor, and the Politics of the Post-Civil War North, 1865–1901* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

9. The anti-Chinese and Workingmen's movement played an important role in how Mexican Californians discussed the strike. See Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), for the essential analysis of the development of anti-Chinese movement in California by 1877.

10. For analysis of this process, see Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: Historical Origins of White Supremacy in Southern California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Albert Camarillo, *Chicanos in California: A History of Mexican Americans in California* (San Francisco: Boyd and Fraser Publishing Co., 1984), and *Chicanos in a Changing Society: From Mexican Pueblos to American Barrios in Santa Barbara and Southern California, 1848–1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979); Richard Griswold Del Castillo, *La Familia: Chicano Families in the Urban Southwest, 1848 to Present* (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984); Leonard Pitt, *The Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846–1890* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

11. Camarillo, *Chicanos in California*, 14–15. See Camarillo for his analysis of how the introduction of the Anglo legal system and discriminatory land laws meant that within a decade, the majority of Mexicans in northern California had lost their lands, while their southern brethren experienced a similar process once they succumbed to population parity with Anglos in the 1860s. Trouble in translation, costly litigation, high interest rates, and overt violence prevented most Mexicans from successfully challenging Anglos in court.

12. This transformation occurred despite the guarantees in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. That treaty, which ended the Mexican-American War, officially recognized California's Mexican population as white American citizens and guaranteed "the enjoyment of all the rights of the United States according to the principles of the Constitution." For more on the effects of the Treaty on Mexican Americans, see Richard Griswold Del Castillo, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: A Legacy of Conflict* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990). Along with demographics, economic and labor changes in California also affected racial attitudes. As Anglo Americans began to view Mexicans as



"permanent laborers" and never as American citizens, Mexicans became a more stigmatized racial other. Anglos simply could not imagine Mexicans as white citizens or white workers, only as "people of local color." See Elliot West, "Reconstructing Race," *Western Historical Quarterly* 34 (spring 2003): 22–23, for a useful summary of race identity in the nineteenth-century West.

13. Gonzales, *Mexicanos*, 87–88.

14. Camarillo, *Chicanos in California*, 21–25. Some might also have challenged Anglo authority outside the law. The bandit Joaquín Murieta became a folk hero to Mexican peoples as he sought revenge against "gringos," killing and robbing as a means of resisting Anglo authority. Mythical heroes such as Joaquín go a long way in illustrating how violent and contested the struggle between California's Anglo and Mexican citizens had become.

15. Camarillo, *Chicanos in California*.

16. F. Arturo Rosales, "'Fantasy Heritage' Reexamined: Race and Class in the Writings of the Bandini Family Authors and Other Californios, 1828–1965," in Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and Chuck Tatum, eds., *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage*, Vol. 2 (Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1996), 100.

17. For more on the "third space" especially as it manifested itself in the early twentieth century, see David Gutiérrez, *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Elliot West has summarized that to many Anglos, Mexicans "posed little cultural threat and played useful economic roles." Mexican Americans were thus "either rendered invisible, segregated in cities and countryside, or they were re-imagined as a bit of American exotica." He concludes that "these people of color became what was much tamer: people of local color"; West, "Reconstructing Race," 22–23.

18. For more on the relationship between the formation of working-class and white identity, see David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), and *Toward the Abolition of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working Class History* (New York: Verso, 1994).

19. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), remains the essential summary of free-soil ideology. The ideology rested on four basic assumptions: labor and capital shared the same basic interests; employers and employees were equal partners in the construction of contracts; waged work, protected by the right to vote and equality under the law, would guarantee equal opportunity; and wage work was a temporary condition en route to small-scale ownership (assuming capital consolidation would not occur.) Free-labor ideology also included an explicit racial understanding that free labor and the western territories were reserved for whites.

20. *El Clamor Público*, August–November 1856.

21. Republican candidate John C. Fremont fared poorly in California relative to his national returns, receiving 18 percent of the California vote compared to 33 percent nationally. However, Fremont fared well in California counties with prominent Mexican populations, receiving *more* votes than either of the other two candidates in Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, and San Luis Obispo counties and placing second in Los Angeles County. Returns compiled by the author from the *San Francisco Herald*, September–October 1856.



22. William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 37-39.

23. Charles Pickett, "Pickett's Pamphlet in the Railway, Chinese, and Presidential Questions" (San Francisco: Henry E. Huntington Library, 1876). By 1877, Collis Huntington, Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins, and David D. Colton owned 85 percent of California railroads. See Deverell, *Railroad Crossing*, for a detailed history of the antagonism between California's citizens and the railroads.

24. Jerome Madden, "The Lands of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company of California" (San Francisco: privately published, 1877). Madden, acting as the official land agent of the Southern Pacific, published this pamphlet in June 1877.

25. Founded in 1872, *La Crónica* served as the major Hispanic organ in Los Angeles. *La Crónica* identified itself as "the organ of the moral, political, and commercial interests of the Spanish people in particular and the 'raza Latina' in general"; June 6, 1877. Reaction to the strike in Hispanic papers shows the role the Hispanic press played in articulating resistance and opposition to Anglo hegemony. The two major Anglo newspapers, the *Daily Star* and *Evening Express*, targeted English readers and Anglo society. Yet it seems reasonable to conclude that many bilingual members of the Hispanic community might have received much of their news from the *Express* and would give meaning to the strike, in part, in terms this wing of the Anglo press articulated. The *Express* was particularly Hispanic-friendly, advocating, for example, "the urgent reasons why the Spanish language should be taught in public schools" and providing sustained coverage of legal cases involving disputed ranch land; July 28, 1877. It also championed the Democratic Party, workers, farmers, and was decidedly anti-railroad monopoly.

26. *Los Angeles Evening Express*, August 4 and 11, 1877.

27. *Press*, July 24, 26, and 28, 1877.

28. *Evening Express*, August 11, 1877.

29. *La Crónica*, July 28 and August 1, 1877.

30. *La Voz del Nuevo Mundo*, August 22, 1877.

31. *Daily Star*, July 22, 1877.

32. Heather Cox Richardson, *Death of Reconstruction*, xiii. See Richardson for a useful summary of this ideological divide and how it ended African American efforts to obtain equality after the Civil War. See also John Mason Hart, *Border Crossings: Mexican and Mexican-American Workers* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1998), where he outlines the emergence of a Mexican working-class consciousness that by the 1870s appeared in Mexican workers on both sides of the border. It is reasonable to conclude that much of what the Hispanic press in southern California was articulating regarding the harm of the strike on the proletariat had its roots in Mexican, not American, labor ideology.

33. *La Crónica*, August 1, 1877.

34. The preceding analysis appeared in the August 1 edition of *La Crónica*.

35. *Daily Star*, July 25, 1877.

36. *Daily Star*, July 19 and 25, 1877.

37. *Daily Star*, July 26, 1877; Mark Hopkins, ed., *Letters from Mark Hopkins, Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, Charles F. Crocker, and David E. Colton to Collis P. Huntington* (New York: J. C. Rankin Co., 1891), 108.



38. *La Crónica*, August 1, 1877.
39. *La Crónica*, August 1, 1877.
40. *Press*, July 25, 1877.
41. *Press*, July 26, 1877.
42. *San Diego Union*, July 20, 1877; *San Diego Press*, July 20-23, 1877.
43. *Press*, July 26, 1877. San Diego's newspapers also reported extensively on the Granger movement. See the *Press*, July 24-26. It is difficult to make connections between the strike and that action mainly because San Diego's press did not. Though papers did not link directly the issues of the strike to the numerous Granger lectures and meetings, the farmers' movement did relate to the rate and monopoly argument insofar as it was the small producers who voiced the most consistent attacks on railroad shipping rates. By the constitutional convention in 1878, San Diego would ally with the "rural" farm representatives against the "urban" corporate interests. See Carl Brent Swisher, *Motivation and Political Technique in the California Constitutional Convention 1878-1879* (Claremont, Calif.: Pomona College, 1930).
44. H. D. Barrows, "Two Notable Pioneers, JJ Ayers and George Hansen (with Portraits)," *Annual Publication of the Historical Society of Southern California and Pioneer Register* 4 (1897): 61.
45. Swisher, *Motivation and Political Technique*, 80, 105-33. Swisher's work remains the only authoritative study of the State Constitutional Convention.
46. Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy*, 128-29; Swisher, *Motivation and Political Technique*, 61.
47. Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy*, 128-29.
48. Swisher, *Motivation and Political Technique*, 102, 110.
49. Proposed by Representative Edward Martin of Santa Cruz, E. B. Willis and P. K. Stockton, *Debates and Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of California*, vol. 1 (Sacramento, 1880), 100. Review of the convention materials and biography of delegates reveals no Spanish surnames. In fact, only two of the 152 delegates were native to the state. This was a significant change from the 1849 convention that included six native Californians and one Spaniard. Swisher, *Motivation and Political Technique* 27-36; Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy*, 129.
50. Another potential area of research might be in Arizona. Manuel Gonzalez speaks briefly of the fight in Tucson to develop a rail line in the 1860s and 1870s that had the effect of reshaping Hispanic and Mexican society. See Gonzalez, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 91-98.